

USAWC STRATEGY RESEARCH PROJECT

RELIGION AND THE MILITARY: A GROWING ETHICAL DILEMMA

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ABSTRACT

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Ethical dilemmas over the issue of freedom of personal religious expression and fair treatment for all faith groups are creating conflicts within the military, both inside and outside the chaplaincies. A lawsuit filed by a group of Navy chaplains, alleging discrimination by the Chaplain Corps on the basis of their religion, is currently making its way through the courts. Recently, a few senior officers at the Air Force Academy were accused of using their position to inappropriately propagate Christian views. Given the fact that non-Judaeo-Christian religious groups are proliferating in the military, it is likely that such conflicts will continue to occur absent an intentional strategy to address this issue. This SRP will review the history of this growing dilemma and recommend ways to address it in a way that is not only fair to all concerned but upholds the American tradition of tolerance toward all religious groups and contributes to a positive command climate.

RELIGION AND THE MILITARY: A GROWING ETHICAL DILEMMA

The young man who knocked on my door and asked, somewhat hesitantly, "Got a minute, chaps?" seemed at first like so many others who want to talk to a chaplain but are reluctant to do so. I invited him to sit down and tell me what was on his mind. His question was one I did not anticipate. In retrospect, however, this was one of the more honest and memorable conversations I have had during my 19-plus years as a Navy chaplain. He asked, "With all due respect, sir, what am I as an atheist supposed to do when you offer a public prayer during a command function? I can't leave, and if I bow my head and participate I feel that I am being hypocritical. What do I do?"

On another occasion, I was approached by a young man who is an adherent of Islam. He was trying to adhere to the dietary requirements of his faith but was having difficulty eating in the mess hall. Specifically, he stated, some of the food servers were using utensils to serve more than one kind of food, and in so doing they were rendering unclean some of the food that he was allowed to eat. "What do I do, chaplain?," he asked.

While I was attending the Chaplain's Basic Course in Newport in 1986, a chaplain was counseled by superiors after delivering a brief meditation followed by a prayer which he concluded with the words, "I ask this in the name of Jesus". He was told that these words demonstrated insensitivity to the Jewish rabbis who were present and that such language would cause him difficulties in future assignments.

Such events illustrate well the kind of dilemmas regularly faced by military personnel, chaplains as well as non-chaplains, in the area of religion. Though we may hear little in the media about military personnel and religious faith, this is not an unimportant issue. Few topics can engender a more heated exchange than a discussion of religion, which is why, in jest but also in seriousness, religion and politics are considered off-limits in many social situations. Religious beliefs are often at the very heart of one's identity and value system, and to question another person's religious beliefs is often to communicate, in effect, a belief that the person is literally going to spend eternity in hell.

It is obvious, therefore, that the accommodation, or lack thereof, of diverse religious beliefs and practices in the military can have an impact on command climate. When personnel perceive that their religious beliefs are at least respected and taken seriously, it follows that their motivation and morale will be positively impacted. On the other hand, personnel who think that their religious beliefs are not respected, or, in the worst case, that their right to believe and practice their faith is being denied, will experience a negative impact on their morale and,

consequently, on their performance. "Command climate" is a multi-faceted and challenging topic, but it is beyond dispute that command climate will impact the morale and performance of military personnel, and that respect for individual religious beliefs is an integral part of command climate.

More is at stake in this issue than just command climate. The United States professes to be the "land of the free and the home of the brave," and an important aspect of that freedom is freedom of religion. If a widespread perception emerges, both among the American public and the international community, that religious freedom is lacking in our military, then America's moral standing among the community of nations is diminished. Conversely, a demonstrated willingness and ability to accommodate religious belief and practice in the military will not only improve command climate but will also demonstrate to the international community that Americans practice what they preach.

As an example, the United States is now engaged in an effort to grow democratic roots in Iraq, and a large part of that effort has to do with getting Shiite and Sunni Muslims to cooperate despite their religious differences. It is not a stretch to say that American credibility as an honest broker in this effort can be undermined if the American military, as well as the larger body politic, has difficulty coming to grips with this issue. America must be perceived as leading the way in guaranteeing not only the freedom of religious expression but also in balancing the competing interests that emerge when people of different faith groups are asked to co-exist.

However, recent discussions on the importance of command climate have omitted the topic of religious diversity and its impact on command climate. For example, Steven M. Jones,¹ and Mady Wechsler Segal and Chris Bourg², speak convincingly in their otherwise excellent articles of the need to improve command climate and leadership in the Army, and make concrete suggestions to achieve that end.

A striking omission from those articles is the element of respect for religious diversity and the impact that lack of such respect may have on command climate and mission accomplishment, not to mention the larger issue of America's moral standing in the world. Segal and Bourg address the issues of race, ethnicity, gender, and sexual orientation, but not the issue of religious diversity. Steven Jones makes a compelling argument that command climate is increasingly important in the Army, but makes no mention of the issue of religious tolerance as a factor in improving that climate.

However, issues surrounding religion and the military are growing and are likely to continue to do so. Specifically, an issue is presenting itself with increasing clarity as well as discomfort to military leaders. It is this: *How does the military effectively balance the right of the*

individual to freedom of religious expression with the responsibility to respect differing religious views and practices? This is not as much a matter of right and wrong as it is of balancing rights and responsibilities: every citizen and military member has the right to worship as he or she sees fit, while at the same time carrying the responsibility to guarantee that right to those who believe differently than they do.

This might also be described as an ethical dilemma because each end is morally justified. On the one hand, it is a fundamental right of American military members to practice the faith of their choice. On the other hand, it is the responsibility of every service member to foster an atmosphere of respect for all religious faith groups, no matter what the personal views of the service member. In particular, it is the responsibility of commanders who 'own' the religious programs within their units to ensure that personnel have access to religious services and pastoral care. Chaplains are staff officers who are mainly responsible for carrying out those religious programs and providing pastoral care, but the program itself, and the ultimate responsibility for its provision, falls on commanding officers.

The issue is not new, of course. Religious issues have been implicitly or explicitly present since the inception of the American armed forces and the decision to appoint clergy to act as chaplains within the ranks. American society, and the military ranks as well, have always been religiously diverse. But diversity is reaching new levels, presenting a challenge to commanders and chaplains alike, and faith groups are becoming more assertive in asking for their rights to be recognized. In the not too distant past, as shall be demonstrated below, the military was not nearly as religiously diverse.

In the earliest days of the chaplaincies, and through much of the 20th century, the Army and Navy Chaplain Corps were dominated by mainline Protestant clergy and Roman Catholic priests. 'Mainline Protestant clergy' are herein defined as clergy from Protestant Christian denominations such as the Episcopal, Lutheran, Presbyterian, and Methodist churches. These denominations tend to be characterized by a hierarchical form of government, a more formal style of worship, an emphasis on the sacraments, and the practice of infant baptism. By contrast, so-called 'non-liturgical' Protestant denominations tend to have a form of government in which the local congregation has a great deal of autonomy, worship is less formal, sacraments are practiced but without the same emphasis as in the mainline churches, and only adults can be baptized. Baptists, Pentecostals, Assemblies of God, and Seventh Day Adventists are examples of "non-liturgical" denominations.

The Navy has had chaplains since November of 1775, when the Continental Congress directed that "[t]he Commanders of the thirteen United Colonies are to take care that divine

services be performed twice a day on board, and a sermon preached on Sunday, unless bad weather or other extraordinary events occur".³ In 1779, John Paul Jones requested a Catholic priest to serve on board the *Bon Homme Richard*.⁴ Not until 1917, however did the first Jewish chaplain receive a Naval commission, and not until 1973 was the first woman commissioned into the Navy as a chaplain.⁵ The Navy chaplaincy was dominated for much of its history by Roman Catholic and mainline Protestant clergy.

The story in the Army is much the same, although the Army diversified its chaplaincy earlier than the Navy. Chaplains served with the Continental Army, though no chaplain is found on the rolls of that army until 1791.⁶ No Jewish rabbi served as an Army chaplain until the Civil War; up to then, only Catholic priests and Protestant ministers served as chaplains. Most of the Protestants were from mainline denominations, although, out of 43 chaplains on the rolls in 1813, five were Baptist and one was a Universalist.⁷ The first woman to enter the Army chaplaincy did so in 1974.⁸

The Air Force Chaplain Service is, of course, an outgrowth of the Army Chaplain Corps. The National Defense Act of 1947, which established the Defense Department, also created the Air Force as a separate service. In 1949, the Air Force Chaplain Service was created and Army chaplains were then permitted to leave the Army and become Air Force chaplains.⁹

From this brief review, it is clear that the military chaplaincies have been dominated by Christian chaplains for much of their histories. Each of the three chaplaincies is committed to supporting religious diversity, and has done so throughout most of its time of service. An example of the kind of language to which chaplains of all three branches are exposed from the time they first show interest in becoming a chaplain is found on the Air Force Chaplain's website:

Through an exciting and varied pastoral ministry, chaplains are the visible reminder of the holy. You are considering the most unique spiritual opportunity that is often more enhancing than one would ever expect.

Currently, there are over 600 active duty Air Force chaplains and nearly 600 in service with the Reserves and Air National Guard. Each chaplain is endorsed by his or her own religious group and remains faithful to the tenets of that body. Chaplains also offer a broadly based ministry aimed at meeting the diverse pastoral needs of the pluralistic military community. Active duty and Reserve chaplains are responsible for supporting both directly and indirectly the free exercise of religion for all members of the Military Services, their dependents, and other authorized persons.¹⁰

In recent years, fulfilling that task has become more demanding. Muslim and Buddhist chaplains have now been added to all three chaplaincies. The integration of these chaplains

and the diversification of the chaplaincies appears to be proceeding smoothly. Nevertheless, it is one thing for a Presbyterian minister to facilitate a worship service for Southern Baptists, but it is quite another thing for that same minister to facilitate worship for Muslims. The same may be said in reverse; it is challenge for imams to provide worship for Christians as well.

Religious diversity among servicemembers, as well as among the chaplaincies, is increasing as well. This diversity is evident not just in the non-Christian religious groups that are becoming increasingly visible. It is also evident in the Christian groups who are represented in the military.

The trend among military personnel toward diversification and away from the traditional expressions of religious faith represented by mainline Protestant and Roman Catholic Christianity mirrors what is happening in American society, as one might expect. A recent poll conducted by NEWSWEEK and BeliefNet summarized its findings in this way:

Whatever is going on here, it's not an explosion of people going to church. The great public manifestations of religiosity in American today—the megachurches seating 8,000 people at one service, the emergence of evangelical preachers as political powerbrokers—haven't been reflected in increased attendance at services. Of 1,004 respondents to the NEWSWEEK/BeliefNet Poll, 45 percent said they attend worship services weekly, virtually identical to the the figure (44 percent) in a Gallup poll by Time in 1966. Then as now, there is probably a fair amount of wishful thinking in those figures; researchers who have done actual head counts in churches think the figure is probably more like 20 percent. There has been a particular falloff in attendance by African-Americans, for whom the church is no longer the only respectable avenue of social advancement.... The fastest-growing category on surveys that ask people to give their religious affiliation, says Patricia O'Connell Killen of Pacific Lutheran University in Tacoma, Wash., is "none". But "spirituality", the impulse to seek communion with the Divine, is thriving.¹¹

Moreover, a research project sponsored by the City University of New York, comparing trends in religious identification of American adults between 1990 and 2001, anticipates the results quoted above. That project showed that the percentages of those who identify themselves as Catholic or Protestant dropped during that decade. For example, the percentage of those who identified themselves as Catholic decreased from 26.2% to 24.5%. Overall, the percentage of those who identified themselves as Protestant dropped from 55.2% in 1990 to 45.1% in 2001. It is important to note, especially for the purposes of this paper, that when the Protestant category was broken down into specific denominations, most of the churches that showed any growth at all were those that, according to the definition offered above, would be considered 'non-liturgical'. The drop-offs were mostly in the 'liturgical' denominations.¹²

The same research project found growth as well in percentages of those who identify themselves as Islamic (+0.4%), Buddhist (+0.2%), or Hindu. (+0.3%). Those identifying themselves as Jewish had dropped from 1.8% to 1.4%.¹³

That same diversity is, as noted above, occurring in the military and within the military chaplaincies. A recent publication of the Presbyterian Council for Military Chaplains summarizes this process within the chaplaincies in the following manner:

Most main-line denominations saw their numbers [of chaplains] decrease while at the same time many newer denominations that had never before sent chaplains to DOD asked to be included. During WWII there were 7 or 8 major Protestant faiths sending chaplains to the services; today over 200 faith groups are recognized by DOD and over 130 send at least one chaplain to the services.¹⁴

As diverse as American religion is becoming, both inside and outside the military, there is one sector of Christianity, evangelicalism, that continues to grow in numbers and influence, and it is from this sector that the most vitriolic disagreements have emerged in the recent history of the military chaplaincies. This issue will dominate the remainder of this paper.

Evangelicalism is difficult to define because it is not a discrete Christian church but a movement that embraces many denominations. Generally, Christian evangelicals may be described as religiously conservative, with a strong emphasis on the moral teachings of the Bible. In addition, most evangelicals would characterize themselves as having had a 'born again' experience in which they commit themselves completely to Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior. Their worship generally reflects what was described above as 'non-liturgical', though evangelicals are found across all denominational boundaries. A study conducted by the American Religion Data Archive claims that evangelicals comprise 23% of the American population.¹⁵

In recent years, the Navy and the Air Force have faced disputes involving evangelicals. Those disputes are summarized below.

In March of 2000, a group of 11 Navy chaplains, all from "non-liturgical," Christian denominations, filed a lawsuit against the Navy alleging a variety of discriminatory practices as well as a climate of hostility toward non-liturgical chaplains. Specifically, the 11 non-liturgical chaplains allege that senior liturgical chaplains have not supported services for non-liturgical personnel. In addition, it is alleged that the Chaplain Corps has unfairly divided chaplain positions into "thirds," with one-third of chaplain billets reserved for Catholics, one-third for liturgical Protestants, and one-third for non-liturgical Protestants, respectively. This system is unfair, the suit alleges, because more than 50% of the Navy's population is affiliated with non-liturgical Protestant groups. This policy, the suit claims, allows the Catholic and liturgical

Protestant chaplains to maintain an undue and prejudicial influence over the Naval Chaplain Corps.¹⁶

A 2003 article in Stars and Stripes noted that the suit had reached the status of class action and that the scope of the suit had widened to include nearly 2,000 current and former chaplains.¹⁷ It is worth noting that, at least partly in response to the concerns brought out in the lawsuit, selection boards that consider chaplains for promotion are now dominated by officers who are not chaplains. In addition, though one must be careful about drawing a direct connection to the two events, the most recently retired Navy Chief of Chaplains was from a non-liturgical denomination, and the prospective Chief of Chaplains is also from a non-liturgical denomination. Whether intentional or not, the Navy's senior chaplain leadership is beginning to have a more diverse flavor. Nevertheless, the lawsuit continues to make its way through the judicial system.

On a similar note, a Navy chaplain from a non-liturgical denomination has recently complained that he has been discriminated against because he refused to practice what he referred to as a "government-sanitized" faith that he calls "pluralism, with a capital P."¹⁸ This development is notable because it openly calls into question the current understanding of chaplain support for a religiously pluralistic environment. Using a phrase popular among Navy chaplains, the role of the chaplain is to provide pastoral care for members of his or her own faith group, facilitate ministry for those not of his or her faith group, and care for all, regardless of their beliefs.

Presumably, by labeling the current climate "government-sanitized", the chaplain is asking for more latitude in proclaiming his faith than is currently considered appropriate. The current climate is exemplified by the long-standing conversation within the Navy Chaplain Corps about ending public prayers with the phrase, "in Jesus' name." Some chaplains believe that a prayer that does not end with those words is not a Christian prayer, and that asking or demanding that they end a prayer without those words is a denial of their freedom of religious expression. As noted in one of the illustrations that began this article, the author and his classmates, upon entering the Navy nearly 20 years ago, were told at the Chaplains' Basic Course that to pray in the name of Jesus at a public, command-sponsored ceremony (as opposed to a Christian worship service) was to demonstrate insensitivity to members of other faith groups that might be present. During this author's career, this has been the subject of heated debate on more than one occasion.

Both views express a legitimate concern. Those who argue that a Christian chaplain's own freedom of religion is abridged when he or she is asked not to pray in Jesus' name,

particularly when that is a requirement of the chaplain's faith group, certainly have a point. A chaplain, theoretically, has the same rights to religious expression as any other servicemember. Can that right be suspended by a commanding officer or a supervisory chaplain when a chaplain is called on to deliver a public prayer at a command ceremony? Such a position, if taken by the chaplaincies, would be fraught with difficulty. Where would a line be drawn as to what a chaplain could or could not say in such a prayer? How much control over what is said in such a setting by the chaplain are we willing to cede to a commanding officer or a supervisory chaplain?

Likewise, those who contend that it is incumbent upon chaplains, in public settings, to demonstrate sensitivity to anyone present who might not share the chaplain's beliefs, also have a valid point. The issue is thorny, and it is argued here that this issue, representing as it does the kind of religious dilemmas currently facing the military, has the potential to cause serious problems not just for the chaplaincies but for the commanders tasked with providing religious services.

In summary, chaplains have a professional responsibility to two distinct groups within the military. The first is their own faith group, the religious organization that ordained them to their ministries and endorsed them for military service. Chaplains are called first of all to represent their own faith groups and to minister to adherents of those groups. The second group, to which all chaplains have an equal responsibility, consists of those who belong to other faith groups. This responsibility is dictated by the reality that it is impossible for every servicemember to have a chaplain representing his or her faith group immediately available at all times and in all places. Thus, any particular chaplain must be ready to assist servicemembers of any and all religious faiths.

This is, again, a delicate balancing act, and it might be argued that the military has the right to limit a chaplain's freedom of speech, during command-sponsored public ceremonies, in the name of providing ministry to all. However, such an approach would create more problems than it solved. First, it would be an undeniable abridgement of the chaplain's freedom of religious expression. Second, it would put commanding officers in the business of dictating to the chaplain what can be said and not said. Third, it would contribute ammunition to the critics of military chaplaincies who hold that the services are creating a "watered-down civil religion."

It should be noted that a commanding officer is not required to have a public prayer offered at a change of command or other command functions. Having a chaplain deliver a prayer at such functions is purely a matter of custom and tradition. Based on the concerns noted above regarding the right of the chaplain to pray in a manner consistent with the requirements of

his or her faith group, and the responsibility of the chaplain to be inclusive, it is possible that the military is headed to the place where prayers at command functions are simply banned, and religious expression is relegated to the chapel.

In the Air Force, the same issue that led to the lawsuit in the Navy has been the subject of discussion. A survey of Air Force chaplains conducted in 2001 found that Air Force chaplains perceive “widespread discrimination in assignment, promotion, and career progress, and they do not believe the situation will improve.”¹⁹ Among the respondents, 97 percent of African Americans, 80 percent of women, and 58 percent of Protestants said they “sensed or directly experienced” discrimination. “Evangelicals continue to lag behind ‘mainline’ Protestants in promotion,” the article notes.²⁰

More recently, an Air Force chaplain alleged that there was a “systemic and pervasive” problem at the Air Force academy involving proselytizing.²¹ ‘For more than a year’, the same article says, “the Air Force has been struggling to respond to accusations from some alumni, staff members, and cadets that evangelical Christians in leadership positions at the academy were creating a discriminatory climate.”²² The Air Force conducted an investigation that cleared the Air Force Academy Commandant of Cadets of six of seven charges of improperly sharing his Christian faith. Nevertheless, according to the article, the investigation found that there was a “lack of sensitivity and confusion over what is permissible in sharing one’s faith.”²³

It is likely that such conflicts will continue. It is undeniable that evangelical chaplains and servicemembers have the right to practice their faith, to have that faith respected by members of other faith groups, both inside and outside the chaplain services, and to be offered the same opportunities for advancement and promotion as any other chaplain. It is equally evident, rightly or wrongly, that those who wish to pray in the name of Jesus on public occasions are going against the grain of traditional chaplain practices and are sometimes perceived as stepping over the boundaries of what is acceptable. These conflicts have the potential to negatively impact not only morale within the chaplaincies but, more importantly, morale within units, or what is called command climate.

Such conflicts, moreover, have strategic implications. The encouragement of religious tolerance and freedom of religious expression is, as noted above, a cornerstone of American foreign policy. A perception by other nations that our own military is rife with religious intolerance will undermine our credibility both at home and abroad and reinforce the notion that America’s leaders are hypocrites who care less for ideals than they do for power. In addition, it will lower the influence of chaplains who serve in multicultural environments overseas. If we as chaplains are unable to achieve a degree of mutual acceptance and cooperation within our own

communities, and if American servicemembers cannot treat each other's religious differences with respect, how can we help other nations to do the same?

The manner in which this dilemma is handled will impact the manner in which future conflicts are handled by military leaders. The military services, as noted above, are growing increasingly diverse in many ways, and such conflicts as have arisen in the area of religion may spread to other areas as well.

The military has three broad options in addressing this issue.

First, allow things to continue as they are. After all, this is not yet an issue that has risen to the level of national discussion. Perhaps chaplains and commanders should simply be allowed to continue to work this out on a unit-by-unit basis, with supervisory chaplains and endorsing agents becoming involved as needed.

Second, the military could cut through the problem very simply by disallowing any sort of religious expression at command-sponsored ceremonies. Chaplains would continue to serve as they have been doing for the last 230 years or so. There would be no restriction on counseling, or ministry of presence, or providing guidance to commanders in the areas of morale and ethics, or any of the myriad other duties that chaplains are often called on to perform. But chaplains would have very little public function in the unit; such expressions would mostly be limited to leading worship in chapel and perhaps, at the unit level, teaching classes on ethics and morality.

Third, the military could attempt to reach an accommodation in this area, providing guidance to chaplains and commanders in such a way that the rights of all servicemembers are recognized and protected.

Of the three, it is the author's belief that the third holds the most promise. The first option means no work in the short run but perhaps more difficulty in the long run. The issue of religious rights and responsibilities is not going to go away, and left alone, it may become more divisive and intractable. Religious and ethnic diversity in the services is not going to decrease but is likely to increase. Thus, to ignore the situation is not only irresponsible but would miss a golden opportunity to demonstrate a genuine commitment to the spiritual well-being of Americans serving in the military.

The second option is attractive in its simplicity. The problem of chaplains performing prayers in a public setting would disappear in an instant. After all, it might be argued, public prayers are a small part of what a chaplain does, and to eliminate them would not do much harm. This might be where we are headed, and truth be told, the American republic would likely not fall if such a policy were instituted. But it is not the best we can do, and as a course of action

represents taking the low road. Chaplains represent more than just their own particular faith group; they also represent the right of freedom of religion, and as such provide a visible guarantee to all servicemembers of their nation's commitment to respect fundamental human rights. This is not a minor matter, and the loss to the military in this respect would mean a loss to all personnel, regardless of their religious preference.

The third option will take the most time and effort, but will in the long run produce not only a better spirit of cooperation and understanding among chaplains and the various faith groups they represent, but demonstrate to the nation and the world that the American military takes this issue seriously and is willing to do the hard work of respecting the rights of its members.

Therefore, it is recommended that the services address this issue in the following manner:

1. Endorsing agents, who screen clergy for entrance into the military chaplaincies, must take a lead role in setting the stage for improved cooperation. It is proposed here that the endorsing agents meet and begin to address the current difficulties. At such a meeting or series of meetings, all three chaplaincies should be represented as well as commanders from all three services. The goal of this effort would be to provide clear guidance to chaplains and commanders in the area of religious accommodation. If, for example, the military is going to allow Christian chaplains to pray in the name of Jesus at a command-sponsored function, then perhaps there are ways that such words can be used along with an acknowledgement that adherents of other faith groups are present. Such a prayer might end with wording such as this: "I invite you to conclude this prayer in your own faith tradition, even as I offer it in the name of Jesus, as in my faith tradition. Amen." Prayers worded in this way are awkward, but this is undoubtedly a more satisfactory conclusion than a prayer followed by hurt feelings for the hearer and diminished standing for the chaplain within the command.

In addition, guidance should be provided to commanders as to how they can best fulfill their duties to ensure that all members of their commands have their religious views respected. This would only reinforce the importance of this issue to our senior officers but would improve the relationship between commanders and their chaplains. It must be understood that this is fundamentally a human issue, one that cannot be solved merely with policy papers and instructions. Rather, in addition to clarifying policy, the relationship between commanders and chaplains must somehow include this as an item of discussion, preferable as soon as possible.

2. The chaplain services themselves must begin to address these issues more clearly. If the current BRAC recommendations are accepted, it is possible that all three

chaplaincies will have their entrance-level schools co-located. This is a golden opportunity to demonstrate inter-service cooperation. If this occurs, and even if it does not, the three schools should create a course on the topic of pluralism, teach it to all new chaplains, and have all sides represented. Senior military leaders and endorsing agents should all be present at some point during discussions. If all three chaplain schools are co-located, then the amount of travel and time it would take to make this happen are minimized.

3. Leaders should hear this topic addressed at senior-level schools. It may not be the most urgent topic on the agenda but there should at least be discussion of the issues involved and a clear commitment by the services to create a climate of tolerance and respect within their commands. Leaders must at least be aware of the dilemma faced by some of their chaplains and address the issue right away in a non-prejudicial manner. It would help greatly if the matter could be addressed forthrightly within a command, before an occasion arises in which the chaplain will be praying publicly at a command function.

To return to the illustrations with which this paper began, I told the young atheist that I sincerely appreciated his honesty as well as his dilemma. My advice to him was to not to bow his head or acknowledge the prayer in any way, but perhaps to spend a moment appreciating the fact that he lived in a nation where people were not forced to pray but were instead invited to do so. I told him that from my perspective, the offering of a prayer at a command function was not to be interpreted as coercive in any way but simply as a reflection of the commander's concern for the spiritual well-being of his or her people.

To the Muslim, I also expressed gratitude that he had brought this situation to my attention. The end result of his problem was that some changes were made in how food was handled in that particular mess hall. This resulted in a win-win for all concerned: the Muslim could eat without a conflict of conscience, and the mess hall supervisors became more sensitive to issues of religious tolerance.

To my fellow chaplain who was counseled at Chaplain's School about praying in Jesus' name, I would offer the thought that while he has the right to pray in Jesus' name, he might consider phrasing his words in such a way as to recognize the presence of those who hold different beliefs.

This issue will be eased but not entirely resolved by new policies or by more training sessions on religious sensitivity. Ultimately, it will be in the hands of leaders who demonstrate fairness in all their actions and who can look on each new religious dilemma with mature

awareness of the issues involved, armed with the skills required to negotiate a fair solution for all.

Endnotes

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